

the debt limit to be increased without the minority party providing any of the votes needed to do so.

So if Republicans want to abscond from their responsibilities, not vote to pay the debt they incurred, so be it. That is a bad thing. It is a bad precedent. But this is the way out. It is a way out. It is a straightforward proposition: If Republicans really want to see the debt ceiling raised without providing a single vote, I am prepared to hold that vote. I can't imagine the Republican leader would object to his own request—his own request.

#### DEBT LIMIT

Now, taking a step back, Mr. President, we need to remember we didn't need to be in this position at all. We could have been well on our way to resolving these avoidable crises last night. The debt ceiling has been raised 80 times over the past 60 years under both Democratic and Republican Presidents, under both unified and divided government.

Ten years ago, Republican opposition to extending the debt ceiling was considered a fringe, a radical idea. The Republican Speaker at the time called the notion of holding the debt ceiling hostage to political ends "insanity."

The Republican leader himself 2 years ago said we needed to raise the debt ceiling because "America can't default," otherwise that would be a disaster. His words.

Well, after last night, it is clear "insanity" and "disaster" are now the Republican Party line, and it is endangering the very bedrock upon which both our economic viability and financial credibility stand.

I hope that our Republican colleagues can walk us back from the ledge in a few hours, but it is a sad state of affairs to see one of America's two major political parties so casually, so gleefully playing with the livelihoods of tens of millions of Americans, all for basically a cheap political goal.

Democrats, meanwhile, are not going to abscond from these core responsibilities. Keeping the government open and preventing default is vital to our country's future, and Democrats are going to make sure we do not lapse on either, in spite of the dangerous path Republicans have chosen to take us on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

#### BUDGET

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am glad that the Democratic leader came to the floor after the Republican leader. He certainly clarified some of the statements that were made by Senator McConnell and brought a dose of reality into the picture. I listened carefully to Senator McConnell's speech, and I was waiting for one word. I knew he would say it at some point, and yet I don't think he did. I might have missed it, but I don't think he ever used the word "filibuster"—"filibuster," the requirement of 60 votes to proceed with the business of the Senate.

The reason why that is essential is the Democrats are prepared to accept the responsibility of funding the government and dealing with our national debt, acknowledging our debt ceiling. And if the Republicans don't care to be part of that conversation—or to engage in it, that is their wish—that is what they can have. But Senator McConnell has put in a filibuster, a requirement of 60 votes, which makes it literally impossible for the Democrats on their own to accept their responsibility. He didn't mention that the entire time.

I think we have reached a new low point in the U.S. Senate, where the Republican leader and his followers, to a person, are prepared to jeopardize the economy of the United States for purely political reasons. We know that this filibuster means we need Republican votes to move this measure. And he has made it quite clear that he won't give those votes, at least as of yesterday. I can only hope that Republican Senators going home, maybe this weekend, hearing from their constituents and businesses, will have second thoughts about this and accept that bipartisan responsibility that we all face.

There is a second you had to listen very carefully to catch with Senator McConnell's opening statement. He went on to say at great length that the last time we passed a debt ceiling extension was in August. And, he said, incidentally, all the spending leading up to August was covered by that debt ceiling. Well, that may have been true. What did he fail to tell us? There was another bill that he voted for, Trump supported, the Republicans supported, and the Democrats voted for, too, in December for \$900 billion in spending. That wasn't covered by the earlier August debt ceiling. He knows that. So to say all the debt of the Trump administration has been taken care of just isn't the fact. And I am glad we have a chance to clarify that.

He seems to think that we are going to "hurt families and help China" if we press forward with the reconciliation bill. Does it hurt families to find an affordable way to have quality daycare for their kids? I don't think so. Does it hurt families when children get a chance for pre-K education so they are ready for school when the day comes? Does it hurt families when we extend education from K-12 to K-14 and say to our community colleges, We are going to give you a mission: Prepare the workforce for the 21st century? Give these Americans the skills they need for a good paycheck and a home and a family and a future.

According to the Senator from Kentucky, that hurts American families. I think he is just flatout wrong. It helps them in critical ways. It really addresses expenses and challenges they face and need a helping hand to succeed.

And in terms of helping China, a competitive American workforce, investment in research and innovation does not help China. If we invest in this

country, in its people and its ideas, we have always succeeded and led the world.

So I disagree with the Senator from Kentucky completely. His approach—tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, corporations that, frankly, can escape any tax liability—hasn't worked. And it won't work. It is fundamentally unfair, and it fails to invest in the people that need it the most: working families, middle-income families, children and their future.

(Mr. PADILLA assumed the Chair.)

#### IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, coincidentally, last Friday, you and I made a trip to Chicago.

Senator PADILLA, as chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee of Judiciary, joined me in visiting one of the most amazing neighborhoods in the city. We spent the day in Little Village, a neighborhood in the southwest part of the city known as the "Mexican Capital of the Midwest."

During our visit, we walked down 26th Street, the commercial heart of Little Village. It is lined with more than 100 family-owned shops and restaurants. People travel from all over the country to try their homemade tamales, stop for their quinceañera dresses, and experience a little slice of Mexico right here in America.

Families who own the businesses on 26th Street are proof that the American dream is alive and well.

Remember La Chiquita Grocery? I think that the founder—I guess it was almost 35 years ago—took the venture of opening a grocery store and now has seven or eight of them in the region. And they are so proud of their anchor store that we were guests in, to show us all the things available to folks in the neighborhood.

Whether these folks arrived in our country a few years ago or a few generations ago, these families contribute to the economic vitality of the city of Chicago every day. Little Village, that we visited, is a major economic engine in Chicago. That 2-mile stretch of 26th Street is the second highest grossing shopping district in all of Chicago. And those family-run businesses generate nearly \$1 billion in sales each year.

Bilingual communities like Little Village make America richer and stronger, culturally and economically. They are living proof that immigrants are still an essential part of America's future. And there are millions of people who have been contributing to our economy and our communities for years. But they have been left behind by our broken immigration system.

That is exactly what the Presiding Officer and I, along with many of our colleagues in the Democratic caucus—that is exactly what we are trying to include as an immigration reform in the Build Back Better package that will come before the Senate in the coming days.

Let me tell you about one of these immigrants that we are focused on.

Roughly 10 miles south of where Senator PADILLA and I toured Little Village, there is a trauma center, Advocate Christ Medical Center. It is one of the busiest in Chicago's South Side.

One of the doctors who recently completed his residency in that trauma center is Dr. Manuel Bernal Mejia. During this pandemic, Dr. Bernal has been saving lives every day in the emergency room. He cared for Chicagoans at all stages of life, from delivering babies to providing comfort to patients during their last moments. And he has cared for more COVID patients than he can count.

It is in our country that Dr. Bernal works every day to take care of our friends and loved ones; it is in our country that Dr. Bernal graduated from college and medical school; and it is in our country that Dr. Bernal has lived since he was 2 years old.

Despite that, Dr. Bernal, who is now an emergency room physician in nearby Rockford, has still been left behind by our broken immigration system. And there are thousands more just like him.

According to the definition established by former President Trump, there are more than 200,000 DACA recipients that have served as "essential critical infrastructure workers" during the pandemic. That includes more than 40,000 healthcare workers like Dr. Bernal. Some of them work in emergency rooms like him and others as nurses, paramedics, respiratory therapists.

So let's ask a basic question when it comes to immigration. Would America be better? Would Illinois be better? Would Chicago be better without Dr. Bernal? All of the Dreamers who are working every day to save American lives in our hospitals? I don't think so.

For Dreamers like Dr. Bernal, DACA has been a lifeline. It has given them a chance to give back to the only home they have ever known. But we all know DACA is not a permanent solution. The reality is, Dreamers have been standing on shaky ground for far too long.

These young people are the best. They defend us as members of our military, care for our parents and family members as home health aides, and they teach our children in school. But because Congress has failed to fix our broken immigration system, Dreamers with DACA can only plan their lives in 2-year increments. And every day, they live in fear that the rug is going to be pulled out from under them at any moment. It happened under President Trump. He tried to eliminate the program. It was finally saved at the highest Court in the land across the street, in the Supreme Court.

Dreamers and immigrants like them, who give everything they can to our country, deserve a path to legal status. The fact is, their future is our future.

As I mentioned, the budget reconciliation package the Senate is expected to vote on soon contains President Biden's Build Back Better Plan, a blue-

print for our Nation to mount an enduring economic recovery.

The proposals included in that plan would supercharge our economy by cutting taxes for working families; making childcare, healthcare, and transportation more affordable; providing a path to legal status for undocumented immigrants.

Let me say that another way. Immigration reform would drive our Nation's economic recovery for years to come. A pathway to legal status for Dreamers, TPS recipients, and essential workers could boost our Nation's GDP by \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years—\$1.5 trillion.

Additionally, a path to legalization could create 400,000 new jobs and increase every American's annual wage by an estimated \$600. How can that be? Putting these immigrants to work on the payroll, how could that help other people? Because we have a dynamic economy, and what we saw on 26th Street in Chicago can be replicated over and over again if these new immigrants are given a chance to work hard, as they all do, show their skills, and build the economy around them. Our Nation is leaving billions, if not trillions, of dollars on the table by failing to fix our broken immigration system.

Earlier this month, the White House published a report that found that providing a path to permanent legal status would "allow . . . currently unauthorized immigrants to pursue and accept jobs for which their skills are well-suited." Many of these immigrants are of prime working age, which means they could help grow our Nation's tax base for the foreseeable future. That is money that can go towards shoring up Social Security, Medicare, and funding our Nation's priorities. In fact, leading economists have argued that America needs immigrants to keep these programs solvent.

In the words of Mark Zandi, Moody's chief economist, the United States is "not going to be able to address our fiscal problems . . . if we don't change our policy with regard to immigration." He is not alone. Other economists agree. Douglas Holtz-Eakin, president of the right-leaning American Action Forum, has argued that, in the absence of immigration, America will "shrink in population . . . become older, and . . . become less important on the world stage."

With the Build Back Better plan, this Senate is finally taking up the important work investing in America's future. That means building railroads and transit networks that will connect communities and providing funding for high-quality childcare so every parent can have a safe place to leave their child during the workday. It also means providing immigrant families the stable footing they need to contribute to our future.

For these families, make no mistake, America is home. Every day, they help to make our communities better and

our economy stronger. That is the case we plan on making to the Senate Parliamentarian once again. This is the first opportunity we have had in a long, long time to begin building an immigration system that works for America. And for our own sake, I hope we can get it done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last night's vote was an exercise in futility, as Democrats knew would be the case.

For months now, Republicans have made it clear that we will not help Democrats raise our Nation's debt limit to finance Democrats' partisan tax-and-spending spree. If Democrats want to pass a massive, partisan tax-and-spending bill without Republican input, they can raise the debt limit without Republican input.

Democrats, of course, have complained they can't raise the debt limit by themselves. The truth is that they don't want to do it by themselves. Democrats want the credit for their social policies and the government handouts they are planning, but they don't want to own the pricetag.

Democrats are talking about engaging in a wild, reckless spending spree that will worsen our inflation problem, threaten economic growth, and substantially increase the government's control over Americans' lives. Republicans can't support that kind of legislation, and we are not going to help Democrats increase the credit card limit to pay for it. If the Democrats want to raise the debt limit, they have to do it by themselves.

I have come down to the floor more than once to talk about the reckless spending and the massive tax hikes the Democrats are planning. I could spend the rest of my time here on the floor today talking about the irresponsible amount of money Democrats want to spend and the tax hikes they are proposing, but today, I want to look at things a little differently.

Last week, House Speaker PELOSI had this to say in reference to the Democrats' \$3.5 trillion spending bill. She said:

It's not about a price tag. It's about values. It's not about a price tag. It's about values.

Mr. President, she is partially right because while the pricetag does matter, this is about more than just the pricetag. This is about values and visions—specifically, Republicans' and Democrats' different visions of government.

The Democrats' bill isn't just about spending money, even though it does spend money—a lot of it. It is about a